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THE KĀMASANDEŚA —
A CONTRIBUTION TO THE RELIGIOUS GEOGRAPHY
OF SOUTH INDIA

The present paper is intended to serve as a brief introduction to the text of the Kāmasandeśa. As the exact interpretation of some of the verses is beset with difficulties, partly due to the poor condition of the manuscript, this is to be regarded as a preliminary report only*.

Introductory remarks

Within the extensive field of *kāvya* literature the genre of *dūtakāvya* (messenger-poems) occupies an important place¹. The oldest and most celebrated example is Kālidāsa's Meghadūta though this type of literature may not have originated with Kālidāsa. Later imitations adhered fairly closely to the model set by Kālidāsa, but it was not until the 13th or 14th centuries that *dūtakāvya* poems were being created in all parts of India². Usually an element of nature (cloud, wind, moon etc.) or

* An edition of the Kāmasandeśa together with a full translation of the first part, explanatory notes and an introduction is under preparation by the present author and Erik af Edholm.

1. The *dūtakāvya* literature receives a rather succinct treatment in the standard histories of Sanskrit literature by WINTERNITZ and KEITH. A more satisfactory account is to be found in a forthcoming work on *kāvya* literature by S. LIENHARD to be published in *A History of Indian Literature*, vol. 3 (ed. by J. Gonda), Wiesbaden. A survey of the rather limited number of *dūtakāvyas* known at the time, is given by CH. CHAKRAVARTI in his *Origin and Development of Dūtakāvya Literature in Sanskrit*, in « Indian Historical Quarterly », vol. 3 (1927), pp. 273-97. A fuller and more up-to-date study is RĀMKUMĀR ĀCĀRYA, *Samskṛt ke sandeś kāvyā. Meghdūt aur uskī paramparā kā ek adhyayan*, Ajmer, 1963 (in Hindi).

2. Examples of older *dūtakāvyas* are Candradūta of Jambukavi (8th-10th cent.) and Pavanadūta of Dhoyī (12th cent.) who is mentioned in Gītagovinda, v. 4. The latter poem, from a literary point of view perhaps second only to Kālidāsa's work, has been translated and commented upon by S. LIENHARD. See *Der Pavanadūta des Dhoyī*, in « Orientalia Suecana », vol. VII (1958), pp. 137-58.

an animal (parrot, peacock, cuckoo, goose, bee etc.) act as messengers. Later the *dūtakāvya* literature was also taken into use by the Jainas and the Vaiṣṇavas in order to propagate their respective doctrines and to impart moral instruction to their followers³. In many of these works abstract concepts such as devotion or the mind fulfil the function of a messenger. The cultivation of *dūtakāvya* came to enjoy a particular popularity in South India and Śrīlankā where it is generally referred to as *sandeśakāvya*. Especially remarkable are those numerous *sandeśa* poems that have originated in Kerala, being written both in pure Sanskrit and in Maṇipravāla (a mixture of Sanskrit and Malayalam)⁴. Beginning with the anonymous Uṇṇunīlisandeśa from the 14th century such poems have been composed in Kerala right up to the present day⁵. Much work has been done by scholars from Kerala in editing and commenting upon these *sandeśakāvyas*, but as their publications are generally in Malayalam they remain largely unknown to scholars outside Kerala⁶. Though the *sandeśakāvyas* from Kerala mostly agree in form with the *dūtakāvyas* from North India, they differ markedly with regard to content. In the North Indian poems the journey is often undertaken through a landscape that is partly or wholly fictitious, and the geographical and historical references that do occur are mostly of a very general nature. As contrasted to these the *sandeśakāvyas* from Kerala abound in data of concrete nature bearing upon geography, regional history and social institutions. In particular, these texts provide us with information about local religious practices, places of pilgrimage, temples and shrines.

3. Among these may be mentioned the Jaina work Meghadūta of Merutuṅga (14th cent.) and the Vaiṣṇava work Manodūta of Tailaṅga Vrajanātha (18th cent.). S. PIANO has studied and translated the latter poem in his *Il Manodūta di Tailaṅga Vrajanātha*, in «Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, Rendiconti della Classe di Scienze morali, storiche e filologiche», serie VIII, vol. XXVIII, Rome, 1974, pp. 953-99.

4. The full spectrum of the literature created in Kerala (Sanskrit, Maṇipravāla and Malayalam) is reflected in the monumental five-volume work by PARAMEŚVARA AIYAR ULLŪR, *Keralasāhityacaritram*, Trivandrum (in Malayalam). Shorter, but very useful and informative, is KUNJUNNI RAJA, *The Contribution of Kerala to Sanskrit Literature*, in «Madras University Sanskrit», Series no. 23, Madras, 1958, 2nd enl. ed. 1980. E. EASWARAN NAMPOOTHIRY, *Sanskrit Literature of Kerala. An Index of Authors with their Works*, Trivandrum, 1972, is a book of limited scope.

5. The anonymous Līlātilakam, a 14th century work on Malayalam rhetoric and grammar, mentions several *sandeśakāvyas* in Maṇipravāla that are now lost.

6. Two popular *sandeśakāvyas* are available in editions accompanied by notes and introductions in English. See Mayūrasandeśa by Udaya. Critically edited with a Sanskrit Commentary by C. Kunhan Raja, Poona Oriental, Series No. 84, Poona, 1944 and Kokilasandeśa of Uddanḍa. Critically edited with Notes by N. P. Unni, Trivandrum, 1972.

The work and its author

An important example of this branch of literature is afforded by the little-known work Kāmasandeśa. A special feature of this text is, as the title indicates, that here it is the Love-god, Kāma, who acts as messenger. The work is ascribed to a certain Māṛḍatta of Kocci (Cochin) and from the historical evidence contained in it (see below) the date of its composition may fairly safely be placed towards the close of the 16th century⁷. Very little is known with certainty about the author Māṛḍatta⁸.

The Kāmasandeśa has been preserved in a single but defective manuscript only. Belonging formerly to the Idappilli Palace it is now in the possession of the Trivandrum Manuscripts Library. No commentary to the text, either in Sanskrit or in Malayalam, has so far been found. It is conventionally divided into two parts, a *pūrvabhāga* and an *uttarabhāga*, comprising 66 and 69 verses respectively. As mentioned earlier, the manuscript is badly damaged and particularly in the *uttarabhāga* there are *lacunæ* in many of the verses (especially vv. 32, 34-49). But also in the *pūrvabhāga* several words and syllables are missing. The text has been edited by Rāghavan Piḷḷa together with three other similar poems in a volume entitled Sandeśacatuṣṭayam, Trivandrum Sanskrit Series — Nos. 204-207, Trivandrum 1963. Apart from a short introduction, his edition contains the bare text only. The printed text can serve as an adequate basis for a translation, needing only some minor corrections. With regard to the orthography, the typical South Indian substitution of *ḷ* for *ḍ* may be noted⁹. Drawing exclusively upon the *pūrvabhāga*, which is the most informative part of the work, some prominent features of the Kāmasandeśa will now be illustrated.

Place names

The route traversed by Kāma extends from Cidambaram on the eastern coast to the holy place of Tirunāvāya, situated on the river Ponnāni, in Kerala. Geographical names referring to towns, villages,

7. Kāmasandeśa is not mentioned in RĀMKUMĀR ĀCĀRYA, *op. cit.* References to it are to be found in PARAMEŚVARA AIYAR ULLŪR, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, p. 346 ff., KUNJUNNI RAJA, *op. cit.*, pp. 231-32, and EASWARAN NAMPOOTHIRY, *op. cit.*, p. 54.

8. We know of three persons by the name of Māṛḍatta, who lived around the time when the Kāmasandeśa must have been composed: 1. Māṛḍatta, father of Nārāyaṇa Bhaṭṭha, the author of the widely popular devotional work Nārāyaṇīyam. 2. Māṛḍatta, younger brother of Nārāyaṇa Bhaṭṭa. 3. Māṛḍatta, teacher of Nārāyaṇa of Toḷānūr, the author of Tantraprāyaścitta and Anuṣṭhānasamuccaya. Whether our Māṛḍatta is to be identified with one of these or is to be regarded as a fourth Māṛḍatta, remains an open question.

9. E.g. *jaḷa* (insensitive) instead of *jaḍa* in v. 10b.

mountains and rivers, occur in abundance. Major centres of political and religious importance are easily recognizable, while the mention of villages and smaller places sometimes poses problems as to their correct identity. One reason for this is that their Tamil or Malayalam names are given in Sanskrit or in a sanskritized form in Kāmasandēśa. In rendering these vernacular names into Sanskrit three main principles have been followed:

1. Literal translation, e.g. Dabhragoṣṭhī (v. 1) which is an exact translation of the Tamil expression CiRRampalam (the small assembly) ¹⁰.
2. Phonetic approximation, e.g. Iṣṭakroḍa, a village mentioned in v. 60. The Malayalam name of this village is TirumiRRakōṭu. There is no semantic relationship between these two forms, but the phonetic shape of (Tiru)miRRakōṭu is vaguely reflected in Iṣṭakroḍa.
3. Independent rendering, e.g. Ambaśaila, a mountain mentioned in v. 63. It is a translation of the Malayalam name Koṭikunnu. Here there is neither any semantic nor any phonetic connexion between the two forms.

Historical and social information

The Kāmasandēśa contains some references to contemporary persons, kings, poets and scholars. The mention of kings enables us to determine the approximate date of composition of the Kāmasandēśa. Thus we read in the following verses:

<i>yadbhāgārdhe vasati nṛpatir dakṣiṇe vīranāmā</i>	
<i>yasmīn hemāny anīśam akhilāny ātmasātkartukāme /</i>	34a-b
<i>anyah kaścīt prabhavati mahaty uttarārdhe yadīye</i>	
<i>yo vā nāmnā bhavati na guṇair acyutaḥ kṣoṇīpālāḥ /</i>	35a-b

10. This is the famous centre of pilgrimage commonly known by the name of Cidambaram (The Ether of Thought). This name is a kind of hypersanskritization of the Tamil CiRRampalam, agreeing well with the theological views associated with the place in question. In the theological system of the South Indian Śaivas, the five elements of earth, fire, water, air and ether are connected with five different temples. The element of ether, *ākāśa*, has been assigned to Cidambaram and the *sanctum sanctorum* (*dabhragoṣṭhī* / *ciRRampalam*) is believed to enshrine an invisible *liṅga*, the *ākāśaliṅga*. In the hymnology of Cidambaram the form *dabhrasabhā* frequently occurs. See H. KULKE, *Cidambaramāhātmya. Eine Untersuchung der religionsgeschichtlichen und historischen Hintergründe für die Entstehung der Tradition einer südindischen Tempelstadt*. Freiburger Beiträge zur Indologie Bd 3, Wiesbaden, 1970, pp. 139-40. In the Kāmasandēśa the form *dabhrakṣetra* is also met with, e.g. in v. 20d. Therefore, the suggestion made by ULLÖR, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, p. 348, and RĀGHAVAN PILLAI, *Sandēśacatuṣṭayam*, p. iii, that the MS. reading *dabhragoṣṭhī* should be emended to *bhadragoṣṭhī*, is wholly unwarranted.

«In its (i.e. the Cōḷa country) southern half there resides a king named Vīra, who has constantly a desire to appropriate all gold. And in its northern half there rules another (king), who by name, but not by virtue is Acyuta (Kṛṣṇa) ».

Vīra in the south and Acyuta in the north should almost certainly be identified with the Telugu kings Vīrappa Nāyaka (Vīrarāja) and Acyutappa Nāyaka (Acyutarāja), local rulers who had risen to power after the downfall of the Vijayanagar empire. Vīra ruled in Maturai 1572-1595 and Acyuta in Tañjāvūr (Tanjore) c. 1600 and it would appear that Vīra engaged in warfare against Acyuta in the first half of the 1580s ¹¹.

One king from Kerala, Rāmavarman, is also mentioned in our text. Verse 33 says:

*yātrāśulkaṃ sakalajagatām asti yatra prabhūtaṃ
tatrasthais tair nṛpatipaśubhir bhujiyamānaṃ balena /
māṭakṣoṇivalabhid akhilatrāṇanaipunyaśuñcur
durvāraṇi yat praśamitakathaṃ nirmame rāmavarmā //*

The interpretation of this verse is somewhat problematical, but this much seems to be clear that Rāmavarman, king of Māṭakṣoṇī (Kocci), abolished some sort of toll or tax (*yātrāśulka*) ¹² that had been imposed upon pilgrims. The identification of this king is not made easy as the royal name of Rāmavarman is often met with in the history of Kerala. The kings there usually assumed that name after their ascension to the throne ¹³. But we know of one Rāmavarman of Kocci (Cochin) who ruled 1565-1601 and who would thus be a contemporary of the two kings mentioned above. The assumption that this king was known in the eastern part of the Tamil country and thus could have exercised a political influence there, is corroborated by an inscription on the western *gopura* of the Cidambaram temple, dated Śaka 1498 (1576). In it is recorded a grant made by the king to the temple ¹⁴.

In one verse of the Kāmasandēśa one feature of the system of land-tenure is alluded to:

*yāmyāṇi mārḡāt kakubhi mahitaḥ kaṇṭhamāṇikyanāmā
vidvadgrāmo bhavati kutukotpādakaḥ paṇḍitānām /* 37a-b

«Off the road in the southern direction, there is an honoured Brahman village by the name of Kaṇṭhamāṇikyā which causes admiration among the learned ».

11. See A. KRISHNASWAMI, *The Tamil Country under Vijayanagar*, Annamalai-nagar, 1964, p. 302 f.

12. This compound is not recorded in the dictionaries. But see D. C. SIRCAR, *Indian Epigraphical Glossary*, Delhi, 1966, p. 327, *sulkaṭiyātrika* « boundary-crossing fee, exit tax ».

13. See KUNJUNNI RAJA, *op. cit.*, pp. 154 f. and 162.

14. See KUNJUNNI RAJA, *op. cit.*, p. 162, and J. HARLE, *Temple Gateways in South India*, Oxford, 1963, p. 158.

The term *vidvadgrāma* refers to the system of *agrahāra*, i.e. rent-free land or villages granted to Brahmins in recognition of their religious and educational services¹⁵. This system was prevalent in many parts of India as is well attested to in the inscriptions¹⁶, but the source-material is unusually rich from South India where the term *caturvedīmaṅgalam* is used alongside with *agrahāra*¹⁷.

As could be expected poets and scholars are shown great esteem by the author of our poem and verse 52 may serve as an illustration:

*dr̥ṣṭvā devīṃ paṭugatir aṭan maṅgalaṃ gaccha deśaṃ
tadbhūratnaṃ dvijaṃ api tathā maṅgalaṃ maṅgalākhyam /
vāggumphasya smara racayituṃ kāṅkṣitas yoktaśeṣaṃ
nirmātuṃ yaṃ miṣakṛtavapuḥ kālīdāsaḥ punarbhūḥ //*

« Having seen the goddess, oh Smara, proceed with resolute speed to the place (called) Maṅgala and also to the auspicious Brahman by the name of Maṅgala, who is the jewel of that area, in order to achieve the complement of the utterance of the desired garland of words. To accomplish this (Maṅgala is) like Kālīdāsa born anew in a form of disguise ».

Māṭṛdatta pays high tribute to the unknown local poet Maṅgala by comparing him to Kālīdāsa, but this should not be understood merely as a conventional cliché. Maṅgala is credited with a special talent for *uktaśeṣa* (complement of the utterance) and this must refer to the peculiar art of *samasyāpūraṇa*, i.e. the completion of an unfinished verse. Proficiency in *samasyāpūraṇa* belongs to the apocryphal traditions that surround the figure of Kālīdāsa. This poet is even supposed to have defeated king Kumāradāsa of Śrīlaṅkā (c. 700) in such a literary contest. This unauthentic tradition is sometimes met with in later Sanskrit literature¹⁸.

15. In South India the land-tenure of a religious character was of three kinds: 1. *brahmadeya*, land owned by Brahmins; 2. *devadāna*, land in possession of temples; 3. *maṭhāpura*, monastic land. The collectively owned tax-free brahman land, *agrahāra*, was the most widely spread form of *brahmadeya*. For these and related terms see T. V. MAHALINGAM, *Administration and Social Life under Vijayanagar*, Madras, 1970, pt. 2, pp. 109-10.

16. See s.v. *agrahāra* in D. C. SIRCAR, *op. cit.*, pp. 10-1.

17. Uttaramērūr, the most well-known *caturvedīmaṅgalam*, and its profusion of inscriptions is studied by F. GROS & R. NAGASWAMY in *Uttaramērūr. Légendes, histoire et monuments*, in « Publications de l'Institut français d'indologie », no. 39, Pondichéry, 1970.

18. An example of a similar tradition is to be found in the 18th century work *Bhojaprabandha* of Ballāla. There the three poets Bhavabhūti, Daṇḍin and Kālīdāsa finish a stanza given to them by king Bhoja of Dhārā. See verse 320.

Religious traditions

The journey in Kāmasaṇḍeṣa begins and ends at important religious centres and the way between these places is studded with *tīrthas* and shrines. Local religious practices are referred to and special attention is paid to the numerous *pratimās* that are often depicted in a humerous manner. Some of them, though, are not easy to identify today. Particularly worthy of notice are the many examples offered by our text which illustrate the relationship between the « great » tradition of Hinduism and the many regional « little » traditions which are associated with local cults and places of worship¹⁹. Elements and beliefs of the pan-Indian tradition are transferred to the regional level and are identified with, juxtaposed with or superimposed upon the local traditions. This generally serves the purpose of enhancing the prestige of a particular deity or place of worship, which is borne out by countless *māhātmyas* and *sthālapurāṇas*. Three examples will now be given, the first referring to the gaṅgāvataṛaṇa:

*śambhoḥ sthānāt pramuditajanād uttareṇāṅga gatvā
draṣṭavyā sā madana śivagaṅgābhīdhā puṇyavāpī /
bhartur mūrdhni sthitiparibhavaḥkruddhagaurīviruddhā
gaṅgā pādāmbujam upagatā yanmiṣeṇodbabhūva //*

22

« Oh Madana, having gone towards the north from Śambhu's place, which makes people rejoice, you will see the sacred tank called Śivagaṅgā. Gaṅgā, obstructed by Gaurī who was enraged on account of the humiliation due to (Gaṅgā's) position on the crest of her (Gaurī's) husband, approached his lotus foot. On this pretext she came into being ».

Here the tank called Śivagaṅgā, which is situated within the precincts of Cidambaram, is identified with the Gaṅgā of the North and is connected with the mythology of Śiva, thereby also playing the role of a rival to Pārvatī²⁰.

The river Gaṅgā is associated with many waters in South India and this belief finds a monumental expression in Kumbhakoṇam, one of the most important centres of pilgrimage in the Tamil country. There a festival is held every year in the month of *māgha* (Jan.-Feb.) and

19. For definitions and discussion of these and related concepts, see M. Marriott (ed.), *Village India*, Chicago, 1955, esp. pp. 190-200; V. RAGHAVAN, *Variety and Integration in the Pattern of Indian Culture*, in « The Far Eastern Quarterly », vol. 15 (1956), pp. 497-505; J. F. STAAL, *Sanskrit and Sanskritization*, in « The Journal of Asian Studies », vol. 22 (1963), pp. 261-75.

20. The intention of glorification is clearly seen in the Cidambaramāhātmya where the Śivagaṅgā is extolled in the following words: « Die Śivagaṅgā ist der berühmteste aller tīrthas, und das Baden in ihr bewirkt die sofortige Vereinigung mit Śiva (mama sāyujya-karaṇa) », H. KULKE, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

particularly auspicious is the *makāmakam* which is celebrated every 13th year, when the full-moon appears in conjunction with certain astronomical incidents. On that occasion the gods are believed to be present and the large tank of the temple is supposed to be replenished with fresh water from Gaṅgā and some other rivers²¹. Within the Śaivaite framework this is referred to in the following verse:

*yatparyante bhavati vipulaḥ ko 'pi padmākaroddho
māghe yasmin kuśalajanani jāhnavī sannidhatte /
antar gantum niṣam avasaram bhartur anvikṣamāṇā
roṣaveśād iva jalaravair āgatiṃ bodhayanti //*

40

« Near which (i.e. the temple of Kumbhakoṇam) there is an extensive lotus tank, in which Jahnu's daughter (Gaṅgā), the producer of well-being, is present in the month of Māgha, looking for her own opportunity from her husband to enter (the tank), announcing her arrival, as if under the pretext of anger, through the rushing of water ».

The last example is taken from the sphere of Viṣṇu who, under the name of Raṅganātha, is believed to reside at Śrīraṅgam which is situated on an island in the river Kāverī²². The relevant verses read:

*śrīraṅgākhyam vraja śiṣayiṣuḥ svairam āgatyā sindhoḥ
śete yasmin harir asahanas toyavātān suśītān /
viṣvag vāpīśiśirapavanaiḥ kleśitaḥ so 'pi bhūyah
ko vā vaidhīm tyajati sutarām kalpanām pauraṣeṇa //
nindyaṃ sthātum śvaśurabhavanam kāma jāmātur ittham
smṛtvā lakṣmīparinayavidher ūrdhvam indrānujanmā /
yac cāgacchad vipulataṭinīcchadmagātrena putrī-
snehādhikyāt salilanidhinā nityam atyaktapārśvam //*

41

42

« Proceed to (the place) called Śrīraṅgam, where Hari dwells with a strong desire to rest there, having come from the ocean on his own accord, incapable of enduring the very cool water breezes. (But) again he is afflicted from all sides by the cool winds from the tank. Who then can abandon through human effort, what is established by rule?

It is blameworthy for a son-in-law to endure (his) father-in-law's abode, oh Kāma. Remembering that the Younger brother of Indra (Viṣṇu) came (here) after the wedding ritual with Lakṣmī together with the Ocean, who was in the form of disguise as a large river, constantly remaining at (her) side out of excessive love for his daughter ».

21. On the *makāmakam* festival see R. K. DAS, *Temples of Tamilnad*, Bombay, 1964, pp. 140-41. The basic myth of Kumbhakoṇam is related and analysed in D. SHULMAN, *Tamil Temple Myths*, Princeton, 1980, p. 64 f.

22. For the mythological background of Śrīraṅgam see D. SHULMAN, *op cit.*, p. 49 f.

Viṣṇu has married Śrī, Daughter of the Ocean, and has withdrawn from the *kṣīrasamudra*. Alluding to the traditional view that there is conflict between a son-in-law and his father-in-law, the author describes, with a touch of humour, how Viṣṇu even at Śrīraṅgam, is not left in peace by his father-in-law, who is present there in the form of a river.

Language and style

The Kāmasandēśa is written in a style which is often artless but not unattractive and which gives more evidence of the author's technical skill than of his poetic talent. Self-confidently Mātṛdatta characterizes his own work in the following words:

*sandēśākhyam madhu navam ito (niyatā)m aṅganāyai
śliṣyadvarṇāvalimayamahābhājane saṅgrhītam /
mandākrāntātmakaparīlasadvṛttacitrācitire
śabdārthālāṅkrītiparimalāvāsasammohanīyam //*

16

« Let this new message be brought from here to the lady, (the message) which is enclosed in a large vessel containing punning series of letters, (a vessel) most wonderful because of the *vṛtta* ornaments which shine all around consisting of the *mandākrānta*, (the message which is) attractive on account of the fragrant perfume of the *śabdārtha* ornaments ».

Word-jugglery, puns and especially alliteration, *anuprāsa* (e.g. *vartate vāgvivartas* in v. 62a), are then conspicuous features of the text. Apart from the literary form and the metre, *mandākrāntā*, there is little in common with the great model of Meghadūta, though occasionally faint echoes of that work might be heard. Cf. Meghadūta P. 15d *barheneva sphuritarucinā gopaveśasya viṣṇoḥ* and Kāmasandēśa 38c *atyautsukyān manasija harer gopaveśasya līlām*.

Our text contains a small number of rare words and meanings, e.g. *aṅga* (mind) and thus *aṅgajanman* (Kāma) in v. 8 and *ahārya* (mountain) in v. 48. In the syntax there are few surprises, but the uncommon construction of *mā* + opt. may be noticed in v. 49b: *sūtram mā mā tava galagataṁ tatkṣaṇam nandayethāḥ*²³.

There are some instances of philosophical notions in the text as in the following verse:

*nīrandhre pathy aṇur asi vibhur viśṛte vā gurus tvam
vātākrānte laghur asi punar laṅghane parvatānām /*

12a-b

23. See L. RENOUE, *Grammaire sanskrite*, Paris, 1961, p. 412.

« When the road is impassable you (Kāma) possess the quality of minuteness, and when it is wide you possess the quality of expansion, and when it is harassed by wind you possess the quality of weight, and when it comes to traversing mountains you possess the quality of lightness ».

The four concepts of *anu*, *vibhu*, *guru* and *laghu* clearly have a philosophical background²⁴. As they are applied to Kāma one should bear in mind the expression *kāmarūpa* (assuming any form at will) and that he is *anaṅga* (bodiless) and, therefore, capable of occupying any position in space.

The humerous vein, so often displayed, constitutes perhaps the most personal trait in Mātṛdatta's literary profile. This can be particularly well observed in the many descriptions of *mūrtis*. They are imbued with human characteristics and emotions and their postures and gestures are interpreted in psychological terms. As an illustration the following verse might serve:

*tasmād gacchan yamadiśi vibho paśya vilvācalendraṃ
viṣṇuḥ sākṣād vasati sahito yatra padmorvarābhyām /
anyāgārasthitivimukhayoḥ kāntayor adriśṛṅgaṃ
tulyaṃ paśyann iva sukhamaṭiḥ ko nu patnīdvayena //*

53

« Going from there, behold, oh Master, in the southern direction (the mountain called) Vilvācalendra, where Viṣṇu incarnate resides together with Padmā (Lakṣmī) and Urvarā (Bhūdevī). While his two beloved (wives) turn their faces away from each others dwellings (?), (Viṣṇu) seems to look towards the mountain top indifferently. Who can be of a happy mind together with a couple of wives? ».

Pārvatī's jealousy of Gaṅgā and the rivalry between Viṣṇu's consorts are recurring themes in the Kāmasandēśa.

Though as a whole the Kāmasandēśa is of slight literary merit, Mātṛdatta can at times attain a certain poetic inspiration and compose in the traditional florid *kāvya* style as in the following description of the river Kāverī:

*līlācañcanmakaranayanā yā payaśśighragatyā
nṛtyatpañkeruhakucabharā lolakulyākarāntā /
mandabhraśyatsalilavasanā gāminī bhartṛdeśaṃ
pratyakṣodyatpulinajaghanā kāmīnīvāvabhāti //*

31

24. One might compare these terms to the eight supernatural powers (*aśvarya*) enumerated by Vyāsa in his commentary on the expression « *tato 'nimādi-prādurbhāvaḥ* » in Yogasūtra III, 45: *anīman*, *laghīman*, *mahīman*, *prāpti*, *prākāmya*, *vaśitva*, *īśitva* and *yatrakāmāvasāyitva*.

« (The Kāverī river) who shines forth like a loving woman on her way to the abode of her husband (the ocean), whose eyes are *makaras* that move around playfully on account of the swift speed of the water, whose breasts are dancing water-lilies, whose fingertips are gracefully (moving) streamlets, whose garment is slowly falling water and whose thighs are sharply rising sandbanks ».

On the other hand, the poet can also write verse that does not seem to conform to the convention of propriety (*aucitya*) of the *ālankāraśāstra* as the following verse bears witness to:

*laṅghyaḥ sahyas tadanu bhavatā yatra dhātrītaruṇyāḥ
keśibhūte mṛgatatimayī yūkapaṅktir nilīnā /*

45a-b

« The Sahya mountain range is to be crossed by you thereafter, where a herd of deer like a row of lice in the hair of the young woman, the Earth, has settled down (on the woodland slopes) ».

This poetic imagery would certainly have astonished the old *ālankārikas*.